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Curios and Relics
Furniture
Desk

Made by Thomas and
Abraham Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Fisher Eugene O.
Lagrange, Ind

Cherry Writing Desk, made by G. Smith,
bought by his fiancee ^{the} ~~falling~~ Nelson at the
Smith sale when ~~she~~ moved from
Spencer County in August 1928.

Jasper Company Owns Desk Made by Lincoln

AN ALMOST priceless relic of the early manhood days of Abraham Lincoln, and one around which is woven a delightful story of the every-day needs of the Great Emancipator is an old-fashioned, solid cherrywood desk now in the possession of the Jasper Desk Company, Jasper, Ind.

This desk, sturdy and painstakingly made, was fashioned by the hands of the president-to-be and his father, Thomas Lincoln, in order that the family's stock of cornmeal might be replenished. Pioneers of more than a century ago, the Lincolns, like many of the old families of Indiana, lived in an era in which barter took the place of borrowing and the rifle was the accepted (and nearly only) means of providing meat for the table.

It was just before the Lincoln family took their departure to Illinois in 1830 that they lived in what is now Lincoln City in Spencer County. Wild cherry trees grew in profusion on the higher ground along the edges of a vast swamp west and north of the Lincoln farm. Hard by was the Enlow mill run by Benjamin Enlow and his wife. To them was entrusted the Lincoln corn to be converted into grits by the ponderous wheels of the mill.

Bartered for Corn Meal

It was not, probably, lack of funds which brought to Miller Enlow the cherrywood desk in exchange for corn meal. Most likely it was the almost universally accepted trade and barter creed of

the proud Indiana pioneers which saved the desk for posterity. The Lincolns needed corn meal and the miller wanted a desk. Ergo, the simple exchange was made and both families had filled their

wants with dignity and pride unsullied.

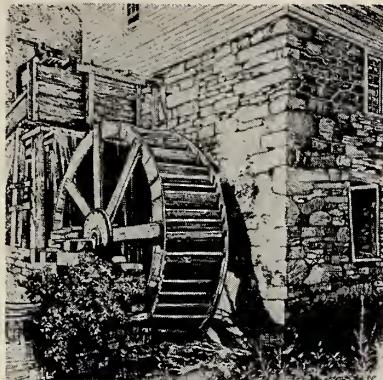
The mill was located at Jasper, necessitating hitching up a team at the Lincoln farm when a trip to Miller Enlow was contemplated. And it would be a rich contribution to history could we but know the thoughts in the mind of the gentle Abraham Lincoln on the morning that he drove, with his precious desk, to "make a trade" with his friend, Miller Enlow. Or to know if he even remotely suspected the historical events in which the cherrywood desk would take a part.

For it was at this desk, passed on and on as new owners came in turn to the mill, that was made out the list of Dubois County men sent to Mexico for the war. Deeds to the old mill were signed on its shiny surface, and a great many thousand dollars were passed across it to German settlers.

Pioneer Construction

Simplicity marks the construction of the Lincoln desk. It has a "lift-top" beneath which is a "journal or ledger" space and below that, a drawer. It measures thirty-six inches in length and twenty-six inches in width. The rear part stands forty-four inches high and the front thirty-four inches.

The desk became the property of the Jasper Desk Company when the late Louis P. Joseph was president of the company. It was purchased from the Eckert family, one of the last owners of the famous mill site.



THE ENLOW MILL IN 1825.



MADE BY THE HANDS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.— This century-old desk was made by Abraham Lincoln, and his father, Thomas Lincoln, and traded to a nearby miller for ground corn.

February 1942

A HOOSIER LISTENING POST

BY KATE MILNER RABB

The story of a wild cherry wood desk, made by the Lincolns and now in the possession of Louis P. Joseph of Jasper, Ind., was told in this column recently by George R. Wilson of this city. There is another old desk in Dubois county, made of tulip wood, whose history, as told by Mr. Wilson, is as follows:

"The first Courthouse in Dubois county was built on the public square at Portersville in 1818. It was used for court trials for twelve years and then the county seat was moved to Jasper. Jasper was laid out and established as the county town by an act of the Legislature, January 21, 1830. At Portersville there were two county buildings—a Courthouse and a county clerk's office—a plan brought to Dubois county from Kentucky.

"In the center of the old log Courthouse at Portersville a small space was railed off, and within the rails while court was in session sat the three judges and clerk, Simon Morgan, in all their original official pioneer dignity. The desk used by Col. Morgan, at Portersville, is now at Jasper, the property of Louis P. Joseph, president of the Jasper Desk Company.

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"Mr. and Mrs. Frank Fisher, who live in the old Rudolph grocery and tavern at Portersville own the old public square and county Courthouse site. The old log Courthouse was used as a pork warehouse for many years after the county seat was moved to Jasper. The pork was brought and "salted down" in the old log Courthouse until such time as was found convenient to haul it to Louisville in covered wagons. When the old Courthouse was converted into a pork warehouse the old desk was taken out and, in time, became the private desk of Landlord Rudolph and through him it came to his daughter, Mrs. Frank Fisher. It was

used in the old Rudolph tavern for many years.

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"The desk is handmade of tulip wood (commonly known as yellow poplar). The dovetailing was well done. Years have not loosened the corners. Very few nails were used; nails and screws were expensive articles a hundred years ago. The desk is large enough to have held all the county records and the 'Dubois County Library' at that time. Dubois county had a library in 1825, paid for by the sale of lots at Portersville. On some of the old law books appear the letters D. C. L.

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"Several years ago Frank Fisher, the owner of the old Courthouse, razed the building and used the yellow poplar logs in the framework for the barn he is now using. These logs seem as good as they were 113 years ago, when they constituted a part of the old Courthouse and jail.

"The Indiana Presbytery was organized at Portersville September 20, 1826, and it again met there September 20, 1926—its first centennial anniversary. Because it was organized in the old Courthouse in 1826, Mr. Fisher had a beautiful gavel made of wood from the old Courthouse and presented it to the Presbytery in 1926, and it was used at that session.

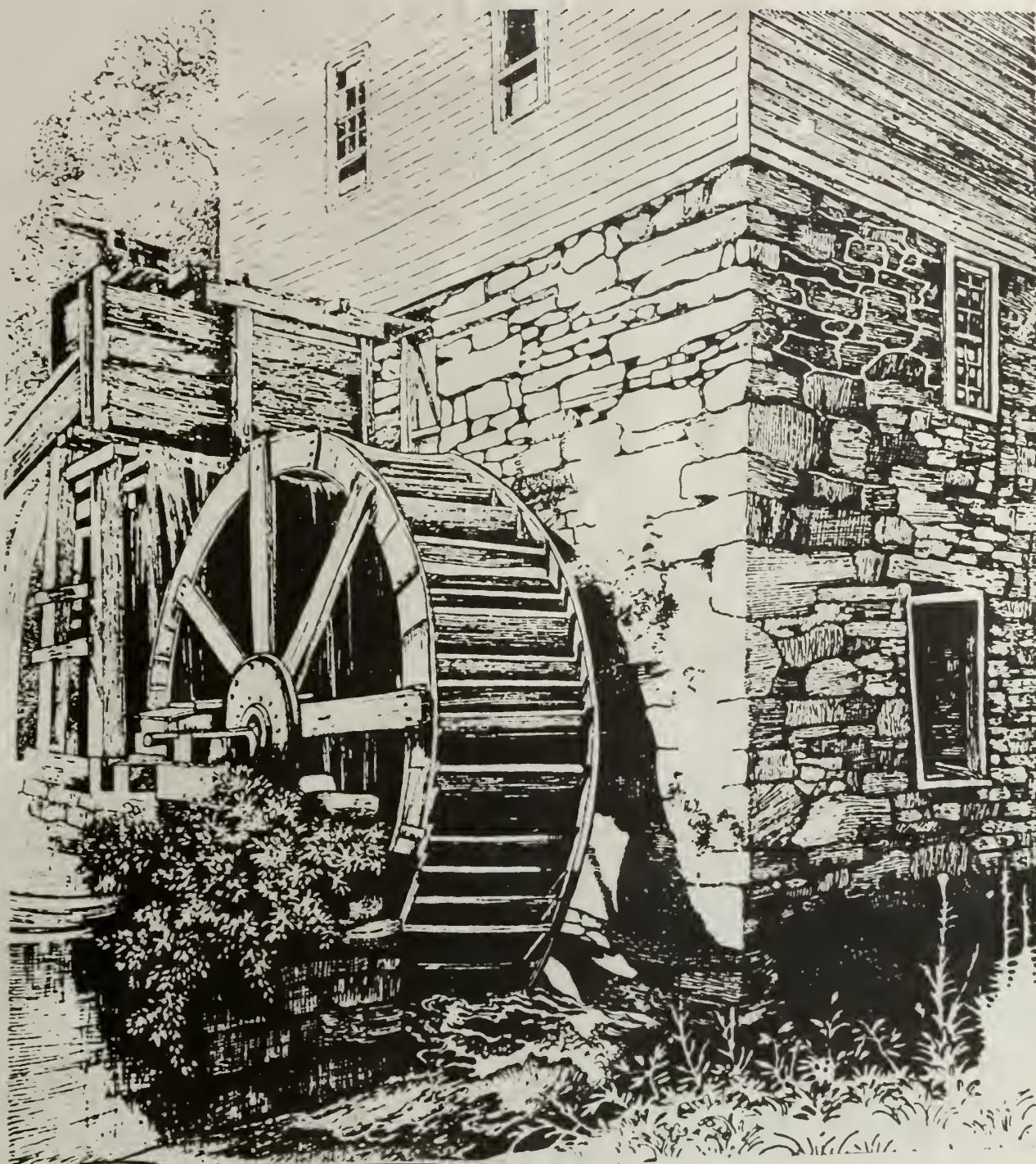
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"The old county Courthouse desk is in a good state of preservation for its age. It is evident that at one time the desk stood within or was part of the railing that surrounded the court bar. The desk is 30 inches long, 28 inches wide and 28 inches high. The lift-top lid is 18 inches; the five filing spaces are 6 inches high. The desk will be on exhibit in the Courthouse hall at Jasper for a few days, after which Mr. Joseph will take it to his own exhibit (which includes the Abraham Lincoln desk) at the offices of the Jasper Desk Company."

ENLOW'S MILL

JASPER, INDIANA

in 1825



In this mill stood this Lincoln desk,
made by Abraham Lincoln and his
father, Thomas Lincoln.

Delivered to Enlow's mill by Abraham
Lincoln and traded to Jacob Enlow for
grist (corn meal) in 1828.

Courtesy George R. Wilson
Dubois County Historian - Jasper, Indiana

This desk is now the property of
LOUIS P. JOSEPH, President, Jasper Desk Company
Jasper, Indiana

